Strigogyps

Strigogyps is an extinct genus of prehistoric bird from the Middle Eocene to Early Oligocene of France and Germany. It was probably around the size of a large chicken or a guan, weighing not quite 1 kilogram (2.2 lb). Apparently, as indicated by the ratio of lengths of wing to leg bones, *S. sapea* was flightless. Its legs were not adapted to running, so it seems to have had a walking lifestyle similar to trumpeters. Unlike other Cariamiformes, which appear to have been mostly carnivorous, *Strigogyps* specimens suggest a herbivorous diet.[1]

S. robustus

The type species of *Strigogyps* is *S. dubius*, which was described by Gaillard in 1908.[2] It was initially placed in the owl order Strigiformes and considered to be a sophiornithid. *S. dubius* is based on a single tibiotarsus from the Late Eocene to Early Oligocene Quercy phosphorites of France. This tibiotarsus was destroyed in World War II during the bombing of Munich, but casts remain. In 1939, Gaillard described a second species of *Strigogyps*, *S. minor*, based on a humerus, two coracoids, and two carpometacarpi, also from Quercy. In 1981, Mourer-Chauviré redescribed *S. minor* as *Ameghinornis minor*, the only member of the new phorusrhacid subfamily, Ameghinornithinae.[3] *Ameghinornis* was later placed in its own family, Ameghinornithidae. In 1987, Peters named another monospecific genus of ameghinornithid, *Aenigmavis sapea*, based on a nearly complete skeleton from the Middle Eocene Messel pit of Germany.[4] Mayr (2005) found *Aenigmavis* to be a species of *Strigogyps*, *S. sapea*, and found *Ameghinornis* to be synonymous with *S. dubius*, as they both came from Quercy, and are almost identical except for coracoids and carpometacarpi of *Ameghinornis*, which Mayr found to be unlike other ameghinornithids, and probably from an idiornithid.[5]

In 1935, Lambrecht described a new New World vulture, *Eocathartes robustus*, and a hornbill, *Geiseloceros robustus*, from the Middle Eocene (Lutetian) of the Geisel Valley of Germany. Each was based on a single specimen, and they were found very close together.[6] Mayr (2007) found them to be synonymous and a species of *Strigogyps*, *S. robustus*.[7]

Strigogyps
Temporal range: Middle Eocene to Early Oligocene
Strigogyps sapea fossil.
Scientific classification
Kingdom: Animalia
Phylum: Chordata
Class: Aves
Order: Cariamiformes
Family: Ameghinornithidae
Genus: †*Strigogyps* Gaillard, 1908
Type species
Strigogyps dubius Gaillard, 1908
Other species
▪ ***S. robustus*** (Lambrecht, 1935) (originally *Eocathartes*/*Geiseloceros robustus*)

Life restoration. The head shape and size is speculative, based in seriemas and phorhusrhacids

Recent studies (Alvarenga and Höfling 2003, Mayr 2005) have found *Strigogyps* to be a more basal member of Cariamae, and not particularly close to the phorusrhachids.[5][8] *Salmila robusta*, another bird from Messel was found to be more basal than *Strigogyps*, and the clade composed of *Salmila* and Cariamae to be the sister taxon to Psophiidae within a monophyletic Gruiformes.[9]

- ***S. sapea*** (Peters, 1987) (originally *Aenigmavis sapea*)

Synonyms

- *Aenigmavis* Peters, 1987
- *Ameghinornis* Mourer-Chauviré, 1981
- *Eocathartes* Lambrecht, 1935
- *Geiseloceros* Lambrecht, 1935

Fragmentary remains from the Palaeocene and/or Eocene of England and North America have also been suggested to be phorusrhachids, but, like *Strigogyps*, they probably are not.

See also

- List of fossil birds

References

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- Peters, Dieter Stefan (2007): The fossil family Ameghinornithidae (Mourer-Chauviré 1981): a short synopsis. *Journal of Ornithology* **148**(1): 25–28. doi:10.1007/s10336-006-0095-z (https://doi.org/10.1007%2Fs10336-006-0095-z) PDF fulltext (https://doi.org/10.1007%2Fs10336-006-0095-z)

External links

- Tetrapod Zoology blog post on *Strigogyps* (https://web.archive.org/web/20110821013552/http://scienceblogs.com/tetrapodzoology/2008/06/youre_not_a_protophorusrhacid.php)

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